

Colorado Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office



Lakewood: Pam Sponholtz, Project Leader

US Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs: Brian Mihlbachler, Biological Scientist, Diane Strohm, Biological Scientist, Greg Speights, Biological Technician, Steve Wallace, Forestry Technician

Buckley Air Force Base, Aurora: Krystal Phillips, Fish and Wildlife Biologist

US Army Pueblo Chemical Depot, Pueblo: Max Canestorp, Natural and Cultural Resources Manager

Rocky Mountain National Park, Estes Park: Chris Kennedy, Fish Biologist

September 2012 Accomplishment Report

Leadership in Science and Technology

Radio-tracking Study: Brian Mihlbachler assisted the US Air Force Academy's (USAFA) Department of Biology with tracking 15 radio-collared mule deer doe's as part of an ongoing animal movement study.



2nd Lieutenants Spencer Buck and Joe Boyle attempt to locate radio-collared mule deer on the Air Force Academy.

Cutthroat Trout Taxonomy: Chris Kennedy co-authored a peer-reviewed journal article entitled "Historical Stocking Data and 19th Century DNA Reveal Human-induced Changes to Native Diversity and Distribution of Cutthroat Trout" which was published in Molecular Ecology. This article will re-define the historical distribution of cutthroat trout in Colorado and give a better understanding on how cutthroat trout populations are currently distributed.

Trail Camera Monitoring: Max Canestorp monitored trail cameras along Chico Creek on Pueblo Chemical Depot (PCD) to assess use of the creek bed as a travel corridor by people and animals.



Day and nighttime visitors to Chico Creek on Pueblo Chemical Depot

Endangered Species Conservation: Brian Mihlbachler reviewed Preble's meadow jumping mouse telemetry data on the USAFA. The 2012 field studies indicate that long distance movement is occurring within the tributary streams of Monument Creek, including both sides of Interstate 25.

Partnerships and Accountability

Williams Lake: Krystal Phillips conducted site visits along banks of the lake to monitor water levels at Buckley Air Force Base (BAFB). Krystal coordinated with the Army National Guard to execute the removal of the aerator by helicopter as a training mission and saved the Air Force \$30K by having the aerator airlifted and redeployed at a neighboring installation in WY. Nice work Krystal!!!



Army National Guard airlifting an aerator out of Williams Lake on BAFB

Public Outreach: Chris Kennedy spoke to Dr. Kurt Fausch's fisheries management class from Colorado State University on the management of the fisheries in Rocky Mountain National Park.

Wildland Fire Management Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between USFWS and USAFA: Diane Strohm completed a revision of the five-year MOU which documents organizational responsibilities and protocols by which each agency will support the other in fuel hazard mitigation and wildland fire suppression.

Pam Sponholtz and Scott Roth, Fish Passage and Western Native Trout Initiative (WNTI) Coordinator, met with Drew Peternell, the Colorado Director for Trout Unlimited to discuss upcoming projects and new funding mechanisms for WNTI.

US Forest Service (USFS) Biological Evaluation: Diane Strohm and Steve Wallace met with a USFS forest pathologist to examine trees weakened by drought, disease and insects. The USFS Forest Health Protection staff at the Lakewood Service Center in Denver partners with the Academy forestry staff by providing technical assistance and funding in support of forest insect and disease programs. The USFS performs an annual biological evaluation of the Academy forests, and has provided between \$50K and \$90K over the past decade to help combat insect and disease agents such as bark beetles and dwarf mistletoe.

Western Division American Fisheries Society (AFS): Pam Sponholtz worked with the Idaho Chapter of AFS to develop an online symposia submission form for the 2013 meeting in Boise, ID.

Stormwater Management: Brian Mihlbachler attended a Regional Stormwater Task Force meeting to discuss stormwater issues and management needs within the Fountain Creek Watershed. Task Force participants have been invited to the USAFA in October to tour stream restoration projects that have been successful, have failed, or are in progress.

Pam Sponholtz worked with JoAnn Wise and Susan Reimer to close out old agreements and balance the COFWCO budget for FY2012.

Chris Kennedy took part in Congressional and media tele-conferences related to the recent publication on greenback cutthroat trout genetics.

Pam Sponholtz met with the Warden and the maintenance staff at the Englewood Federal Corrections Institution to discuss fisheries management goals for Henry's Lake.

Cooperative Agreement between BAFB, USFWS, and Colorado Parks and Wildlife: Krystal Phillips coordinated Dave Richie with Air Force Transformation Installation Support Team, to track down the status of the Cooperative Agreement.

Coordination for BAFB Wildlife Management Plan Mediation: The contract for this project was awarded the 3rd week in September, with a kick-off scheduled for early October. Krystal Phillips provided a tentative "save the date" mediation schedule to internal and external stakeholders.

BAFB Natural Resource FY12 projects: Krystal Phillips conducted site visits to evaluate the performance outlined in the scope of work and locations of the project footprint for Russian olive removal and the prairie dog fence barrier.

PCD Boundary Fence Discussions: Max Canestorp participated in discussions concerning the integrity of PCD's boundary fences, and conducted field investigations to determine where repairs are needed.

Species Conservation and Management

Migratory Bird Surveys: Krystal Phillips conducted bird surveys at opportunistic times when in the field or when the President of the United States was in town to identify areas of high avian activity to avoid during aircraft take off.



Chris Kennedy conducted electrofishing trend surveys on the Fall and Colorado Rivers. These two sites were included in a study to look at mercury concentrations within Rocky Mountain National Park. The Colorado River survey was done in conjunction with an educational program with Sam Crane's Middle Park High School science class.



Chris Kennedy (COFWCO) weighing fish on the Colorado River with Sam Crane's Middle Park High School Science class.

Brian Mihlbachler drafted the USAFA's response to Ecological Service's request for information on Preble's that should be considered for outstanding delisting petitions and the upcoming 5-year status review.

Pam Sponholtz submitted contracting information to fund Colorado State University for baseline avian surveys on BAFB.

Pueblo Chemical Depot 70th Birthday Celebration: Max Canestorp and Pam Sponholtz participated in Pueblo Chemical Depot's 70th anniversary celebration. Happy birthday PCD!

Habitat Conservation and Management

Lake Williams NEPA Analysis: Krystal Phillips met with BAFB and the USFWS hydrologist to conduct a site visit to discuss how to capture the volume of evaporative loss. If the

evaporative loss exceeds the threshold documented in regulatory compliance documents, BAFB may need to undertake a Section 7 consultation for endangered species as a result of the Platte River Project Initiative.

Noxious Weed Surveys and Control: Max Canestorp conducted noxious weed surveys on PCD, and initiated control measures on tamarisk, Russian olive, and Canada thistle.

Waldo Canyon Fire Restoration: Forestry restoration work in the Waldo Canyon Fire burn area is nearing completion on the USAFA. Approximately 100 trees downed during emergency fire suppression work have been hauled back to the Natural Resources woodlot, where they will be sold as firewood. Revenues support the Academy forestry program. Numerous limb piles and brush resulting from fuelbreak expansion were chipped in place. These measures were necessary to facilitate restoration and erosion control work that will take place this autumn and to reduce fuel loadings.

Fuelbreak Planning: Steve Wallace has been performing field reconnaissance and lining out brush removal areas to be cleared this winter. He is focusing on the west boundary of the USAFA, where fuel loadings are heavy and a wildfire could quickly spread up the face of the adjacent foothills.

Fuel Mitigation around Munitions Storage Site on the USAFA: Steve Wallace and Diane Strohm are overseeing brush clearing and tree thinning in proximity to this area of special concern. Defensible space will be expanded through the removal of trees, lower limbs and brush.

Bark Beetle Surveys and Management: Steve Wallace continues to focus on field surveys to locate infested brood trees on the USAFA. Only one pine was found in 2012 infested with

mountain pine beetle, the culprit that has devastated four million acres in Colorado. Instead the USAFA is battling the Ips Pine engraver beetle using aggressive management to locate and treat infested trees. Nearly 300 Ips-infested pines have been found in 2012.



Ponderosa pine infested with Ips pine engraver beetle on the USAFA

Dwarf Mistletoe Control: Diane Strohm and Steve Wallace continue to salvage dwarf mistletoe-infected trees by removing mistletoe-infected limbs on the USAFA. Pruning limits the spread of this parasitic plant, which weakens trees and predisposes them to insect attack. Seeds are expelled in late summer, spreading the plant to adjacent trees. Approximately 50 trees were pruned in the past month.

Forest Thinning: Logging operations continue on a 35-acre area near the USAFA Archery Range. The project objective is to enhance forest health by reducing overstocking and removing insect and disease-infected trees. Steve Wallace has served as primary field inspector on this project.

Habitat Restoration: Chris Kennedy conducted pre-restoration work on the Cache la Poudre River and Willow Creek. Work included mapping of backwaters, collecting water flow and pH readings and determining the extent of

fish distribution. These two waters are proposed for native trout restoration.

East Toll Gate Creek Master Plan: Krystal Phillips provided onsite support to discuss native riparian vegetation and oral history of the landscape when conducting a field visit with the BAFB Water Quality Manager, Stormwater Contractor, and Hydrologist. This field visit allowed the Hydrologist the ability to recommend changes to the future drainage design of East Toll Gate Creek at the southern end of the installation, which is experiencing head-cutting and erosion.

Cultural Resources

Wildland Fire Control and Cultural Resources: Max Canestorp met with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to discuss inclusion of cultural resource concerns in the proposed PCD Wildland Fire Management Plan. An addendum concerning the same will be added to the PCD Integrated Cultural Resource Management Plan.

Public Use and Recreation

Brian Mihlbachler guided youth and women turkey hunters on the USAFA. Four birds were taken during the fall season which ends October 7, 2012.



Brian Mihlbachler (COFWCO) with successful youth turkey hunter on USAFA.

Brian Mihlbachler coordinated with the Cadet Wing on the use of the USAFA trails for an upcoming Falcon 50 mile ultramarathon.

Workforce Planning

Pam Sponholtz and Krystal Phillips worked with Human Resources on a Seasonal GS-5 BioScience position for BAFB to help with avian surveys and small mammal control.

Pam Sponholtz assisted Larry Gamble, Region 6 Fisheries Supervisor, with interviews for the Project Leader position in Montana.

Pam Sponholtz met with Max Canestorp to discuss the FY13 budget for PCD.